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ABSTRACT

The manual guides institutions of higher education and evaluation teams through the evaluation visit and subsequent accreditation processes of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, describing the Commission's policies and procedures. Chapter I brings together information on the work of the Commission's Consultant-Evaluator Corps. Chapter II reviews preparations the institution will need to make for the team visit beginning 2 years before the visit. Chapter III informs the team, and especially the team chair, about the early and thorough planning that is an integral part of every successful visit. Chapter IV describes the evaluation visit for the team and the institution. Chapter V focuses on the Team Report, including the desired format for organizing reports and the various options available to the team in developing its recommendation. Chapter VI provides a detailed description of the review processes of the Commission. Chapter VII clarifies aspects of preparing for, conducting, and reporting a focused evaluation, as they differ from a comprehensive evaluation. Chapter VIII deals with special cases, such as pre-visits, sequential visits, international visits, interregional visits, joint visits, generalist visits, and confirmation/advisory visits. A series of timelines, checklists, and sample documents are included as appendices. (JDD)

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A MANUAL FOR THE EVALUATION VISIT

1990-92

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

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A MANUAL FOR THE EVALUATION VISIT

1990-92

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Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

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1990-92

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Preface

The North Central Association's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education publishes and periodically revises its three essential documents to provide current information about the Commission's policies and practices relating to accreditation and institutional improvement to institutional representatives, evaluators, and all those who are interested in the work of the Commission. These editions include expanded information in a number of areas and reflect significant new emphases in the evaluation of international education programs and the assessment of student achievement.

The Commission staff have prepared this 1990-92 edition of *A Manual for the Evaluation Visit* to guide institutions and teams through the evaluation visit and subsequent Commission processes. Together with the *Handbook of Accreditation* and *Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation*, it provides institutions, team chairpersons, and team members with a description of the principles, policies and procedures that currently govern the Commission's accreditation process. The *Handbook* is the core of this set of documents, and both this *Manual* and the *Guide* assume their reader's familiarity with it. All three documents are revised and republished on a regular basis. Significant changes in policies and procedures occurring between publications are reported in the Commission's *Briefing* newsletter. Questions about current policies and procedures should be directed to the Commission office.

The *Manual* is a critical document for **both** the institution and the team in understanding Commission policies and procedures and in having realistic expectations for the evaluation visit. The *Manual* is organized as follows:

- **Chapter I** brings together in a new chapter all of the information on the work of the Commission's Consultant-Evaluator Corps.
- **Chapter II** reviews the preparations the institution will need to make for the team visit beginning two years before the visit.
- **Chapter III** informs the team, and especially the team chair, about the early and thorough planning that is an integral part of every successful visit.
- **Chapter IV** describes the evaluation visit for the team and the institution.
- **Chapter V** treats the Team Report. While the report is ultimately written by the team chair, all members of the team need to be fully conversant with the information this chapter contains since they are responsible for drafting sections of the

report and submitting them to the chair. It also discusses in some detail the various options available to the team in developing its recommendation including advice about the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation. **Since team chairpersons are asked to organize their reports—and especially their recommendations—in a specific format, this chapter should be read with special care.**

- **Chapter VI** provides a detailed description of the review processes of the Commission.

- **Chapter VII** has been revised to clarify all of the aspects of preparing for, conducting and reporting a focused evaluation that differ from those for comprehensive evaluations, particularly the charge to the team. All those involved in a comprehensive evaluation need to read the entire *Manual;* those involved in focused evaluations will need to read Chapter VII with special care.

- **Chapter VII** provides information on special types of visits including a new section addressing international visits.

A series of timelines, checklists, and sample documents are included as appendices to the *Manual* to assist institutions and teams in preparing for the visit.

The *Handbook*, *Guide*, and *Manual* include an index to inform the reader where information on the Commission's various policies can be found in each of the documents.

The Commission staff hope that this *Manual*, together with the *Handbook* and *Guide*, will answer most of the questions team chairs, team members and institutions will have about this process. Please let us know if you have additional questions.

I

The Work of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps

The Consultant-Evaluator Corps

At every step in the accreditation process educators from throughout the North Central region offer their time and expertise to render the judgments and establish the policies that embody the Commission's purposes of public certification and institutional improvement.

- As **evaluation team members** they examine institutional effectiveness, provide advice and counsel for institutional improvement, and recommend accrediting actions to the Commission;
- as **Accreditation Review Council members** they participate in the review processes of the Commission, the next step in the evaluation process following the team visit, as well as on advisory panels;
- as **Commissioners** they have responsibility for decisions on the affiliation of institutions, for the formulation of Commission policies, and for the oversight of Commission operations.

The Commission's decision to base its evaluation of institutions of higher education on qualitative criteria rather than quantitative standards made its Consultant-Evaluator Corps a critical component of the accreditation process.

From the very early development of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps in the 1960s, it appears that the Commission decided that it would attempt to enhance the reliability of its team processes through restricting the size of the Corps. After making several

visits in a short period of time, the NCA Consultant-Evaluator would ultimately bring to the evaluation process the wisdom and sensitivity accrued through those visits. Moreover, by restricting the size of the Corps and the size of the visiting team, the Commission also determined that Consultant-Evaluators would be institutional generalists rather than administrative or programmatic specialists.

Now that office automation would allow the Commission to expand the size of the Corps significantly, the Commission remains committed to a small corps. Where other regionals might have evaluator corps numbering in the thousands, the Commission's C-E Corps currently numbers approximately 700. It has learned that experienced Consultant-Evaluators provide significant reliability and validity to the Commission's processes. The experience level of almost every team precludes the need for Commission staff to accompany teams; it allows the new C-E to experience good training on every team. Moreover, NCA evaluators act as institutional generalists, seldom confusing professional and institutional accreditation. It should be noted that through years of experience many of the faculty on the Corps have gained a breadth and depth of institutional knowledge unsurpassed by many CEOs. The Consultant-Evaluators appear to value highly their involvement with NCA and most are willing to take on extra responsibilities as needed. In the foreseeable future, then, NCA will continue to do its work with a small corps of Consultant-Evaluators. However, it will strive to improve the effectiveness of the Corps through enhanced training programs, through stronger efforts to identify and recruit appropriate members, and through ongoing evaluation of the Corps.

Composition of the Corps

Members of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps are chosen according to these criteria: (l) they provide evidence that their training, experience, and accomplishments qualify them to contribute judgment and expertise to the accreditation process; (2) they represent a wide variety of institutions and professional competencies, and come from all geographical areas within the North Central region; and (3) they can give to the Commission the commitment of time and energy necessary for the accreditation process to move smoothly. Each year the professional staff of the Commission reviews the Consultant-Evaluator Corps and adds approximately fifty educators to it who both meet these criteria and have the skills and talents needed to meet the special needs for upcoming evaluation visits.

Drawn from large institutions and small, from long-established ones and new; from private institutions and public, church-related and secular; from vocational-technical institutes, community and junior colleges, four-year colleges, professional schools and universities; from towns of five hundred and cities of several million, they are as diverse as the Commission's member institutions. Such diversity makes genuine peer review a reality rather than a catchphrase. Yet for all their differences, the members of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps are similar in their willingness to give generously of their time and expertise, their dedication to educational excellence, and their commitment to the principles underlying voluntary accreditation.

Responsibilities of C-Es

The responsibilities of a Consultant-Evaluator are significant. Institutional evaluations require considerable preparation before the visit (studying institution and Commission documents, making arrangements on the home campus, and so forth). The visit itself usually requires four days including travel time; and usually one of those days will fall on a weekend, most typically Sunday. Immediately following the visit, members of the team will be involved in writing parts of the Team Report and/or revising the report before its submission to the institution, and ultimately to the Commission. All Consultant-Evaluators, then, must make a commitment of time above and beyond that required for the on-site visit.

The Role of the Evaluation Team

The evaluation team has two primary functions consistent with the Commission's purposes. They are: a) evaluating the institution to determine whether the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria are met and, on the basis of that evaluation, recommending that accreditation or candidacy be granted, continued or denied, and b) offering advice and suggestions for institutional improvement. The seriousness of these responsibilities, their importance to many people both within and outside the institution, hardly needs to be emphasized.

Team members are charged neither with enforcing government regulations nor with measuring an institution against a uniform set of standards or preconceptions. Instead, they are asked to exercise their collective judgment to assess an institution in relation to the Commission's Criteria. The team begins with **the institution's own stated mission and purposes** as a postsecondary educational institution and evaluates how that mission and those purposes are being realized. (See *Handbook*, Chapter II, and *Guide*, Chapter III.)

When it has completed its evaluation, the team formulates its accrediting recommendation and summarizes its findings in a written Team Report. Like the institutional Self-Study Report to which it is, in part, a reaction, this Team Report must contain certain essential elements. (See Chapter IV.) The team's report becomes a crucial part of the written record which members of the Commission's review process, Commissioners, and members of the next evaluation team to the institution consider in making their own recommendations and decisions.

Once they have submitted their comments on the draft report, team members' responsibilities for the assignment are fulfilled. They will receive a copy of the final report and will be notified of the final action taken by the Commission, but they are represented during the review processes of the Commission by the team chair. Should they receive comments or questions from or about the institution they have visited, they should refer that person to the Commission. **Under no circumstances should they discuss the details of the team's deliberations or try to speak for the team.**

To evaluate. To advise. To recommend. To report. To respect professional obligations of confidentiality. These are the responsibilities of the evaluation team. To fulfill them well, the team's chair and the team's members must see that the visit is as carefully planned and conducted as their report is carefully written.

Conflict of Interest

In an effort to guard against conflict of interest in the Commission's processes, staff construct all teams within specific Commission guidelines:

- normally, no member will have visited the institution as a North Central evaluator within the previous five years, unless the institution explicitly approves such participation;
- no member of the team will currently be from the institution's own home state or a state in which it operates significant sites;
- no member of the team will have been a recent appointee or employee of the institution, or will have close relatives who are appointees or employees of the institution;
- no member of the team will have been a graduate of the institution;
- no member of the team will have expressed personal opinions bearing on the accreditability of the institution.

These guidelines also direct the Commission's choices of participants in other review processes (e.g., Readers' or Evaluators' Panels and Review Committees.)

Since staff cannot know of every possible conflict of interest, the Consultant-Evaluators themselves are asked to refuse an invitation or assignment if any conflict of interest might be possible. In addition, Commission policy stipulates that team members should not serve as consultants to the institution during the year following the official action on the evaluation visit. To do so will result in the evaluator's removal from the C-E Corps.

While it is possible that some team members will find they know one another or have served together on other teams, it is just as likely that the team members will be meeting and working with one another for the first time. While it is possible that a team member might know someone at the institution being visited, it is also likely that team members are seeing an institution for the first time.

Evaluation of C-Es

Consultant-Evaluators are evaluated on a periodic basis. Members of the team and the team chair are asked to complete an evaluation form. Areas of evaluation by team

members may include preparation, participation, professionalism, and judgment. Team chairs may also be asked to comment on the quality and timeliness of the written materials submitted by team members. The evaluation process offers the Commission reasonable assurance that its Consultant-Evaluators fulfill the Commission's stated expectations and assists the Commission staff in developing appropriate training and retraining programs as well as printed materials for new and experienced Consultant-Evaluators.

Review of C-Es Who Relocate

When members of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps change institutions, the practice of automatic continuance on the Corps begins to interfere with ongoing efforts to maintain a balanced and representative Corps. Therefore, when a C-E moves to a different institution, his/her place in the Corps must be reviewed. While it is likely that most C–Es will be continued on the Corps after the move, it is possible that individuals may be thanked for their past work and notified that for the time being the Commission cannot use their services.

II

Institutional Preparations for the Visit

Choosing the Dates for the Visit

When the Commission sends its reminder letter approximately two years before the scheduled evaluation, its asks the institution to consider dates for the visit. Establishing the evaluation date at this time enables the institution to develop a solid timeline for its preparations and enables the Commission to begin coordinating the approximately 200 evaluations that will occur in most evaluation cycles. The institution is asked to provide three possible dates for the evaluation. In scheduling evaluations, the Commission will give preference to the institution's first choice. When the second reminder letter is sent approximately one year before the visit, the Commission will confirm the scheduled date. The institution may request a change in the evaluation dates at this time. The institution makes a firm commitment to the visit dates when it approves the proposed team.

In choosing the dates for the visit, an institution should be sure that its faculty and administration will be available, that students will be in classes, and that other scheduled campus activities will not make it difficult for the team to do its work. If the evaluation includes a request for changes in the Statement of Affiliation Status or if it is for initial candidacy or initial accreditation, the institution will want to consider the date of final Commission action (perhaps several months after the team visit) and choose a date that will permit timely action. Institutions should also check the schedule of professional meetings that might involve people from the campus or members of the team (e.g., the NCA Annual Meeting, AACJC, AAHE). The Commission calendar of Review Committees, Commission meetings and the Annual Meeting is published in the *Briefing* newsletter.

Experience has shown that teams prefer visits that begin on Monday. This allows them to travel on Sunday (some take advantage of less expensive airplane fares by traveling on Saturday) and be back on their home campuses at the end of the last day of the visit.

On rare occasions rescheduling is necessary close to the time of the visit. When significant events occur beyond the control of the institution and the Commission, the Commission staff should be notified immediately and be given the opportunity to decide in consultation with the institution whether the visit should proceed as planned. If the visit is scheduled at the institution's request, the Commission will bill the institution for any direct costs associated with the rescheduling (e.g., penalties for cancelled plane tickets).

The Selection of the Evaluation Team

For some time prior to most comprehensive evaluation visits, the institution and the Commission staff member assigned to it have been making specific preparations. The institution has engaged in an intensive self-study process and is organizing its findings into a written Self-Study Report; the staff member has assisted the institution in that process. Together, they have established a plan for the self-study, worked out a timetable, and set the dates for the evaluation visit.

During the year before the visit, the institution usually indicates the areas of expertise and kinds of institutions it would like to see represented on the evaluation team. With those suggestions in mind, the staff liaison attempts to compose a balanced team from among the members of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps. (In exceptional cases where an institutional evaluation requires professional background that no current member of the Corps has, the staff may suggest educators from outside of the Corps or outside of the region.)

Several months before the visit is to take place, the staff member sends a list of proposed evaluation team members to the Executive Officer of the institution for comment. This list is accompanied by Professional Data Forms providing information on each proposed team member's present position, experience, and areas of expertise. The institution should express any concerns or reservations it may have about any of the proposed team members, and these concerns are considered when the Commission staff member develops the final team. While the Commission reserves the right to make the final choice of all evaluation teams, it makes every effort to alleviate serious institutional concerns. The institution is consulted on any subsequent changes in the team's makeup because of such things as scheduling conflicts and emergencies.

Observers

From time to time institutions ask whether observers—representatives from national church boards or state regents, for example—can be present during the team visit. While the Commission does not encourage the practice, its staff will consider each request on a case-by-case basis. The team chair, the institution, and the Commission staff liaison must agree that the observer can be present. The team chair must assure that the observer does not participate in the team's final decision.

Logistical Arrangements

The Executive Officer will be asked by the team chair to make hotel reservations for the team. If possible, a meeting room should be reserved at the hotel for team meetings. A meeting and work room will also be needed on campus. That meeting room will house the institutional materials the team will need for review and reference. (See Appendix C of this *Manual*.) Secretarial assistance is also desirable; in recent years some teams have sought ready access to a personal computer and a private telephone.

Some chairs want to arrange in advance meetings with key personnel: members of the governing board; representatives of the state coordinating board or other related agency; faculty representatives; student representatives; alumni and community leaders. Almost all chairs will schedule time with the governing board and open meetings for faculty and staff. The institution should announce the visit and ask its people to be on campus, available to the team.

Institutions might choose to host a dinner or social hour one night of the visit; typically such an event is small and allows the team to accomplish some of its work (e.g., a dinner meeting with Trustees or department chairs). Such events are not covered by the evaluation fee.

Budgeting

Most of the Commission visits are billed in accordance with a fixed fee schedule. When it pays that fee, the institution has no more financial responsibilities for the team's transportation, housing, and meals except for the limited social even it might choose to host. An institution is not obligated to transport the team during the visit, but if it does provide a car or livery service, it absorbs those costs.

In budgeting for the evaluation, an institution should include: (1) the fixed fee, (2) costs of printing multiple copies of the Self-Study Report and other documents, (3) its limited entertainment expenses, and (4) overhead such as released time, secretarial help, costs of gathering data, postage, and special equipment. Some visits require a Review Committee appearance (see Chapter VI); in these cases the institution should budget for travel and lodging for two or three people to come to Chicago.

Team members expect to pay for their own expenses. Institutions should not attempt to pay bills that clearly belong to the team, for such attempts simply lead to misunderstandings that interfere with the visit.

The Written Materials

The institution prepares sets of materials for use during the evaluation process. Each set for a comprehensive evaluation includes: (1) the appropriate Self-Study Report;

(2) completed Basic Institutional Data forms (sent to the institution by the Commission a year before the visit) which provide a summary of statistical information concerning finances, enrollment trends, etc.; (3) the latest institutional catalog(s); and (4) faculty and student handbooks.

The general formula for determining the number of sets needed for the evaluation process is as follows:

- one set for the Commission office
- one set for each member of the evaluation team
- review process
  - — three sets for the Readers' Panel process
  - — up to twelve sets for the Review Committee process
- any number of sets the institution wishes to produce for its own use

The institution sends one set to the Commission office **two months** before the visit and one set directly to each team member at least **one month** before the visit. In addition, the institution sets aside in an office on campus relevant supporting documents for use by the evaluation team (see Appendix C).

The office of the Commission sends to the institution and each member of the evaluation team the Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet, a copy of the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status and Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status, the official record of the most recent comprehensive visit, the official record of any focused visits that have taken place and/or institutional changes approved by the Commission since the last comprehensive evaluation, and an expense voucher. Additional materials will be available to team members during their evaluation (see Appendix C).

Making the Most of the Evaluation Visit

The institutions that derive the greatest benefit from evaluation visits are those with a clear and accurate sense of their strengths and their concerns. They are also the institutions that have prepared the total institutional community for the visit.

Many teams mix formal and informal interviews; they might meet in a scheduled session with student government leaders, for example, but they might also simply scatter themselves through the cafeteria during lunch and speak with random groups of students. Too frequently people on campus expect that all team contacts will be through formal, scheduled interviews, and they forego the open meetings and wait for team members to come to them. Teams have limited time and extensive responsibilities, and even the tightest schedule will not allow teams to spend time with everyone on campus. Teams also have to spend considerable time reading materials and, therefore, they will not be interacting constantly with people on the campus.

People at an institution should understand the typical flow of a team visit; they should know the people who definitely will be interviewed; they should know when the team will hold open meetings. They should also speak with the institutional coordinator of the visit if, during the visit, they are concerned that the team may be overlooking an important aspect of the institution. While the institution cannot tell the team how to conduct its visit, it can certainly express to the chair of the team any concerns it might have as the visit is progressing.

Teams fill a dual role: they certify and they consult. When teams are struggling to uncover information related to certification, they tend not to be as open in their consulting capacities. When they do provide informal observations and advice, these are sometimes misinterpreted and a comment is taken as an indictment. The best advice for an institution is to wait for the exit session and the written report to review the team's final evaluation. Those two formal parts of the visit will place many of the informal interchanges in a clearer context.

Teams cannot solve major problems; teams cannot resolve internal disputes. Institutions that politicize the visit only make it harder for the team to conduct an objective review. An Executive Officer of an institution experiencing tension is advised to do everything possible to assist the team in understanding clearly and easily the major factors contributing to the tension.

Clear communication, realistic expectations, institutional preparation, and open cooperation: these are the factors that make a team visit as productive to an institution as possible.

III

Team Preparations for the Visit

Establishing Lines of Communication

Once team members accept an evaluation assignment, the Commission formally notifies the institution and the team and distributes an **Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet** (EVSS). This document provides a brief description of both the institution and the visit, including the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the executive officer, the team members, and the Commission staff liaison. (See Appendix D.)

When notified that the team is complete, the team chair is asked to contact the institution's Executive Officer to make arrangements for the visit. (Team members should not contact the institution individually.) Together, the chairperson and the Executive Officer identify the key people at the institution who will be interviewed during the team visit, make arrangements for the team's hotel accommodations, agree on the materials and facilities that will be at the team's disposal while they are on campus, and discuss any other aspects of the visit that need to be worked out beforehand. Because teams are often completed months before a visit is scheduled to occur, the team chair should make an initial contact with the institution and the team soon after the team is complete to let them know when more specific details of the visit will be forthcoming. If subsequent changes in the team are made, care should be taken by the team chair to use the most recent EVSS in communicating with the team.

In special cases, the chair may arrange for a pre-visit if the institution requests it and the Commission staff concurs. Pre-visits are scheduled only when an institution believes that its structure or geographical locations will require special advance discussion of a substantial kind. (See Chapter VIII.)

Planning for the Visit

The team chair writes to the team members to inform them of preliminary arrangements for the visit. Throughout the planning process, the team chair keeps team members

informed of how arrangements are progressing. Team members will need information about when they should arrive, where they will be housed, the time and place of their first team meeting, when they can expect to finish their work, and a variety of other practical matters. **Team members are expected to arrive in time for the first team meeting and to stay the full number of days scheduled for the visit, departing shortly after the exit session.**

In addition to an Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet, the team chair receives a **Professional Data Form** on each of the team members. These forms provide information about the background and competencies of each member of the team. The team chair should also use the Professional Data Form information to develop a tentative evaluation plan and division of responsibilities. By sharing the plan with the team some weeks before the visit, the chair might make important adjustments before the first team meeting. The chair should stress that *each* team member is to become familiar with *all* of the institution's written materials before the visit takes place.

If the team includes a new member of the corps, the chair should arrange for that person to work with more experienced members of the team.

Analyzing the Written Materials

Before the visit, team members carefully examine all of the materials they have received from the institution and the Commission. The institution's written Self-Study Report is especially important as a primary source of information for the evaluation. Since this report reflects the design of a self-study process that has usually taken many months, it is important that each member of the team understand the nature of that design. The Self-Study Report may be framed in a variety of ways. The report may be comprehensive, comprehensive with specific emphases, or topical. It may also be built around a current special institutional study or around documents that have been produced by a regular institutional research program. The Commission staff will make any special aspects (such as special emphases) of the self-study design known to the team, and the institution will describe them in the report itself.

The Self-Study Report is the team's basic reference during the visit, since the report is required to demonstrate clearly and explicitly that the institution satisfies the Criteria for Candidacy or Accreditation. As they read it before the visit, the team chair and the team members will want to ask themselves a number of questions, including:

- Does the Self-Study Report show that the institution has engaged in a genuine, useful self-study process?
- Does the Report contain the information required by the Commission? (See *Guide*, Chapter IV.)
- Does it adequately demonstrate that the institution fulfills *each* of the Criteria for Candidacy or Accreditation? If it does not, what further information is required? What needs amplification, clarification or special examination?

- Does the institution have, or is it developing, an appropriate program of documenting student academic achievement?
- Does it adequately demonstrate that the General Institutional Requirements are met?
- Is the Report sufficiently evaluative?
- Are there inconsistencies between the Report and information in the Basic Institutional Data Forms, the catalog(s), or the faculty or student handbooks?
- Are there inconsistencies between the information in the Report and that included in the materials the team has received from the Commission?
- Who are the key people to interview?
- What functions, operations, or program areas deserve special attention?
- What institutional strengths and concerns does the Self-Study Report identify? Is there a plan for responding to the concerns?

It is important for the team to remember that its charge is to evaluate the *institution*, not just the report. A poor Self-Study Report may make a team's task more difficult, but it does not necessarily mean that an institution does not fulfill the Criteria; a well-written Self-Study Report is not a substitute for fulfilling the Criteria. Sometimes team chairs conclude that the team needs further information or documentation before it arrives on campus. Before asking the institution to supply extra materials, the chair should contact the Commission staff.

The Commission also sends information to the team and the institution for review before the visit. (See p. 10 and Appendix C.) After examining all of these materials, the team should be prepared to approach its first team meeting with a clear idea of questions and areas it will want to discuss and examine during the evaluation.

Since each team member's familiarity with Commission policies and procedures will differ, one of the chairperson's major responsibilities throughout the visit will be to orient the team to the Commission's philosophy and practices. The *Handbook of Accreditation*, *Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation*, and this *Manual* are required reading for every team member. In addition, the Commission staff may distribute specific policy statements that apply to a particular evaluation. The team chair must serve as the on-site guide for the application and interpretation of these documents as bases for the team's evaluation and recommendation.

The Commission Staff and the Team Visit

Just as the Commission staff provide assistance to institutions in preparing for the evaluation, they also provide assistance as needed to team chairs and team members. Well before the visit is conducted, the team chair should indicate to the staff any

questions about the size and/or competencies of the team. During the visit, the team chair should call the Commission office to clarify Commission policy, to discuss special situations, and/or to confirm that the team is accurately describing the Commission's processes. In preparing the Team Report, the team chair may seek advice from the Commission staff concerning its organization and content. The team chair is asked to send copies of any correspondence related to the evaluation to the Commission staff member assigned to the institution.

Because the Commission believes that the accreditation process must be based on the principle of peer review, a member of the Commission staff rarely joins an evaluation team, and then only as an observer and with the institution's approval.

Team Expenses

The Commission reimburses travel and subsistence expenses incurred by the team. Team members receive expense vouchers before an on-site visit. They should be prepared to pay their own travel, hotel, and meal expenses during the visit, and then submit their expense vouchers to the Commission office when they return to their home campuses. **Expenses should not be billed to the institution or directly to the Commission.** A guide for reimbursable expenses is printed on the back of the expense voucher form. Failure to follow established procedures can delay reimbursement.

IV

Conducting the Evaluation Visit

Length of the Visit

An evaluation for initial or continued accreditation or initial candidacy normally lasts three days; an evaluation for continued candidacy usually lasts two. The day before the visit is to begin and the last day of the visit are partially devoted to travel to and from the institution; the rest of the visit is spent on the institutional evaluation. However, if circumstances warrant it, the team chair may extend the visit beyond its scheduled length after consulting with the Commission staff.

Team members arrive **the day before** the visit is officially slated to begin for an initial team meeting. The team chairperson will have earlier notified each of them of the time of the meeting. Together, the team chair and the Executive Officer will have decided either to arrange an informal dinner for the team to meet representatives of the institution or to leave the first evening free for the team to begin its work. If a social function is scheduled, it should be both early and brief.

The First Team Meeting

At the team's first business meeting, the chairperson should review the specific plans for the visit, establish final assignments, and **make each team member's report writing responsibilities clear.** The team chair should also use the first business meeting to clarify the team's task, concentrate its attention, and establish a unified attitude toward the evaluation. Team members should be encouraged to approach their work informally, as colleagues and peers rather than as inspectors. They should keep their attention on evaluating the institution in relation to the Criteria and should avoid trivial detours. To see only flaws and weaknesses, or to compare everything to one's home campus, will distort the evaluation and distract the team from its central responsibility of approaching the institution it terms of *its own objectives.*

With these ideas and objectives in mind, the team chair usually establishes an agenda for the first team meeting that looks something like this:

- **Orientation.** Review the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for the status sought, the *Handbook of Accreditation*, the *Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation*, and this *Manual*. Remind the team that all evaluation materials, conferences, conclusions and recommendations are to be kept confidential.

- **Preliminary Impressions.** Have an open exchange of preliminary reactions to the written materials the team has studied. Allow each member of the team to share his or her analysis of the materials and identify any areas of conflicting opinion. Guard against *a priori* conclusions, but use this discussion to establish working hypotheses as points of departure for the team's first day of work.

- **Commission Policy on Institutional Practices.** Remind team members not to let themselves be drawn into debates on the relative merits of specific approaches to particular problems. As representatives of the Commission, they should make it clear that the Commission does not prescribe specific practices concerning such issues as unionization, collective bargaining, academic freedom, teaching loads, class size, departmental budgets, due process (for students and faculty), affirmative action, and institutional sponsorship of non-academic activities. Whatever their own personal biases may be, as representatives of the Commission, team members should be neither advocates nor adversaries of any particular approach to these issues. However, because the Commission expects institutions to evaluate their policies and practices on such matters, the team should include within its evaluation and subsequent report assessment of such practices if they affect the institution's ability to meet the Commission's Criteria. If individuals at the institution express particularly strong or singular views regarding the impact of a particular practice on the institution's effectiveness, their opinions should be cross-checked and verified by talking to others. *Such opinions, if not verifiable, should not be included in the report.*

- **Schedule and Assignments.** Plan individual and team activities and establish a tentative timetable for each day. Assign responsibilities for interviews. During most evaluations, governing board members, every officer of the institution, every division/department head, and as many faculty members as possible should be consulted. In a small institution, every faculty member should have an opportunity to speak with some member of the team and as many students as possible should also be interviewed. The team will usually want to schedule and publicize an "open time" when team members will be available to speak to anyone who wants to see them. At team meetings throughout the visit, the team chair will want to check on the team's progress in interviewing campus people so that as many people as possible are seen, and no one who *must* be seen is omitted.

- **The Team Report.** Compiling the final report is the chairperson's responsibility, but team members are expected to draft those parts of the report that the

chairperson assigns them. For the evaluation process to function on schedule, each team member must complete thoroughly and promptly the writing he or she has been asked to do. It is critical that the chair inform team members of how the report will be handled. Some team chairs prefer to have a rough draft of the Team Report completed before they leave campus; others request that sections be submitted within a week of the visit. The team chair may suggest that, while rough drafts are to be submitted by the end of the visit, anyone who wishes to write a more polished version for submission after he or she returns home is welcome to do so. But if the chair wants to have a draft report in hand before leaving the campus, it will be necessary to encourage team members to record their reactions, questions, and judgments *throughout* the visit rather than waiting until the end.

- **Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status.** Before the visit, the team will receive a copy of the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) from the Commission. The Worksheet should be reviewed at the first team meeting. In the course of the visit, the team will need to verify the accuracy of the information currently listed on the SAS, particularly in the Educational Programs and Locations sections. The Worksheet also will include any changes the institution is seeking approval for as a part of the current evaluation. The team will want to determine whether any additional changes are contemplated. At the conclusion of the visit the team will use the SAS Worksheet to develop its formal recommendation to the Commission.

Conferences with the Executive Officer

The team's first conference on the morning the visit officially begins should be with the Executive Officer of the institution and anyone else the Executive Officer invites to attend. The Executive Officer will welcome the team, make some opening remarks about the institution and the visit, and perhaps introduce several key members of the administrative staff; the team chair will introduce the members of the team. This meeting should be more than a social occasion; it establishes the tenor of the visit. The Executive Officer should be prepared to answer any initial questions the team may want to pose, and the team should be prepared to pose them. **The Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status should be reviewed for accuracy.** It is also useful for the team chair to state officially why the team is there (e.g., "to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the bachelor's degree-granting level") to make certain that there is no confusion. **If confusion does exist, the chairperson should contact the Commission staff immediately.** The team may also use this meeting to begin to schedule appointments with various members of the administration, faculty, staff, and governing board, if this has not already been done.

Periodically during the visit the chair should check back with the Executive Officer to ensure that appropriate interviews are being conducted. This alleviates the post-visit confusion that occurs when disagreements arise about whether certain interviews were conducted.

Many chairs find it good practice to meet with the Executive Officer before the exit session to explain briefly the contents of the team's oral report. This is especially important if the team's recommendation clearly will be a disappointment to the institution.

Data Gathering and Evaluation

Sound recommendations and decisions on whether an institution meets the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation or Candidacy require a firm base of accurate data and other information. No single method of assembling and analyzing this information can be specified. However, there are some general principles that should guide the team during the visit.

- The team must judge the institution *as a whole*. Therefore, the team needs to make sure that it has sufficient information about the entire institution for its deliberations. On a comprehensive evaluation with special emphases that information, found in the Self-Study Report, should be complete, even if less voluminous. Unless the first day of the visit provides reason to doubt the accuracy of the information, the team should spend more time focusing on the special emphases than on confirming all of the Self-Study Report.

- Even if institutions might, teams should not ignore the most commonly overlooked aspects of an institution: its off-campus programs, its study abroad offerings, the intercollegiate athletics program, special programs offered only at certain times of the year (such as summers), and the institution's relationship to affiliated but separate organizations; in short, those activities that fall outside of the immediate day-to-day concerns of many persons on the main campus.

- Since the collection of data about an institution could be endless, the team needs to determine the extent and the kinds of data it must have to make its evaluation. This determination should be based on the level of detail appropriate to the judgment to be rendered—a judgment on the institution as a whole rather than on every single activity within it. The financial condition of the institution is important, for example, but the information the team needs about finances typically can be found in summary audit reports rather than in extensive examination of every item of expenditure.

- If the institution has a procedure for accomplishing a particular task, the team's responsibility is to examine the procedure and its application in a few cases, not to examine each application individually as if a guiding procedure were not in place.

- Sampling, where appropriate, can be an efficient way to obtain needed information in the limited time available to a team. Sampling assumes that a few randomly chosen individual cases will represent a whole group reasonably well. The method is useful in examining a file of written information, or in choosing

persons for interviews. The random choice can be done informally by simply picking a few cases here and there. Some examples of where the method can be useful are:

— ***Faculty credentials.*** Characteristics of the faculty as a whole usually can be determined from a representative sample of credentials.

— ***Student records.*** Examination of selected student records sheds light on whether admissions policies are followed, whether general course requirements are enforced, whether graduation requirements are met.

— ***Library holdings.*** Spot checks of randomly selected sections of the holdings give a basis for judging the adequacy of the collection for the institution's purposes.

— ***Student papers.*** Course papers, theses, and dissertations provide evidence of the standards to which students are held for the award of degrees.

— ***Interviews.*** Sampling can also be used to select individual students, faculty members, administrators and persons from other groups to provide information about the views of such groups on institutional activities. The team should plan to interview a representative sample of the institution's administrators, division/department heads, faculty, and students. Often, group interviews conducted by individual team members are the most efficient way to speak to as many people as possible.

In many cases, the team will determine that adequate information about various aspects of the institution appears in its Self-Study Report and related documents. In such cases, informal verification of some of that information by sampling will often allow the team to use the rest of the report with confidence in its correctness and completeness. There is, after all, no point in the team's trying to collect for itself information that is already available in the institution's written documents.

The team's purpose in gathering these data is to evaluate whether the institution satisfies the Criteria for Candidacy or Accreditation as described in the Commission's *Handbook of Accreditation* and *Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation.* Because the team also provides consulting advice, it should endeavor to base that advice on thorough evaluation.

Team Meetings

The chairperson should organize each team meeting carefully, deciding in advance what needs to be accomplished. Each meeting will usually include brief reports from team members on the areas they have been examining and discussion of those areas by the entire team. The team chair should encourage such discussion while assuring that everyone stick to the point. Since the team's time is limited, it should not be wasted.

A major strength of every evaluation is the exchange that goes on within the team's meetings. Team members pool their experiences and resources, stimulate and question one another, search and argue, until points are clear and consensus has been reached. In most cases, the team will make its decisions through such consensus rather than through fiat or majority vote. And part of the reason for having the team lodged in the same place is that proximity facilitates the exchange of ideas, opinions and information necessary to reach consensus.

The team chair should make sure that the team meetings run efficiently and end at a reasonable time. A closing hour for evening meetings should be set and honored. At each meeting before the last, the team should review its progress and, if necessary, revise the remainder of its schedule to pursue issues that need further clarification.

At the final team meeting, the team seeks agreement on the proposed content of its report and consensus on its formal recommendation. The team chair should make clear his/her expectations of team members for the timing and content of the Team Report. If one or more team members dissent strongly from the team consensus, they may file a minority report of their own. (The kinds of recommendations a team may make, the proper wording for each, and the use of the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status are discussed in the next chapter.)

Finally, at the last team meeting the team should prepare for the exit session with the institution's officers. It should agree on the strengths and concerns it wishes to emphasize, on whether the team chair or the various team members will present the team's views, and on what its recommendation will be. At this point, if questions are raised about the content of the recommendation or the options available, particularly if the team is considering imposing a sanction, the team chair should call the Commission staff.

If at any point in these meetings team members disagree over matters of Commission policy and practice, the chair should contact the Commission staff. It is a good practice to contact the office before holding an exit session that will involve denial of an institution's request.

The Exit Session

Before leaving campus, the entire team meets with the Executive Officer and others the Executive Officer invites to attend to summarize its findings and report its recommendation. This *exit session* should provide the institution with an oral preview of **all the major points** that will be in the team's written report.

It is imperative that both the content and the tone of this oral report be consistent with the written report the institution will later receive. The oral report should leave no doubt about the team's judgments and, after it, the written report should hold no surprises.

The team must accurately report what its joint recommendation will be. It should emphasize the fact that, positive or negative, the recommendation must proceed through the other Commission processes which may or may not alter it.

When the team's oral report is completed, the Executive Officer may raise questions about it. If the Executive Officer or other administrators believe that the team has been misinformed or has misunderstood something important, they should say so, and the team should be prepared to double-check if its facts are questioned. However, both the team and the institution's representatives should avoid turning the exit session into a debate. The institution will be given an opportunity to file a formal, written response to the final Team Report, and that response is the proper place for challenging the team's interpretations or judgments. Based on the team's presentation in the exit session, the institution should have enough information to begin preparing its written response even before it receives the final report.

If the exit session raises important, unresolved questions, the team may need to reconvene afterwards to reconsider some aspect of its report or recommendation. If necessary, it should take time to clarify its position or make sure of its facts and, in extremely difficult cases, it may be necessary for the team to extend its stay to gather and assess the additional information needed. Normally, after the exit session the team will conclude its work and leave for home.

V

The Team Report

Preparing the Team Report

The team chair composes the Team Report. Although the chair will draw heavily on the comments, ideas, and rough drafts of the other team members, he or she is not limited to cutting and pasting. Instead, the chair is responsible for writing a clear, concise, well-organized, and coherent document that will stand up under the careful scrutiny of a wide variety of readers. The team chair must honestly reflect the views of the team, and should indicate (without identifying individuals) any significant disagreements within it. All of the major points made in the team's oral report at the exit session should be included in the written report. The team chair's responsibility is to compose a report that conveys the team's recommendation and its rationale for that recommendation. Thus, the chair must clearly understand what that recommendation and that rationale are.

Since the team chair is responsible for writing the Team Report in a very limited time, it is critical that he or she have rough drafts of each section of the report either before or shortly after the visit ends. If the chairperson chooses not to require that the entire report be written before leaving campus, he or she should establish a firm date when all sections are to be submitted. Team members should realize that many institutions schedule their evaluations so that they may have Commission action at a particular time. It is critical, therefore, that team reports be completed on schedule, and that team members cooperate with their chairperson by submitting their portions of the report on time. The draft report should be completed as soon as possible after the visit, while the information and impressions of the visit are still clear and sharp.

Audiences for the Team Report

While writing, the chairperson should remember that the report is intended for a large audience—the Commission staff, the Accreditation Review Council members who will take part in the review process, the Commissioners, the Executive Officer and others at the institution, and the members of subsequent evaluation teams, to name the

most obvious. Therefore, balance is important. The chair might choose in the introduction to explain if the report is weighted toward one audience (e.g., "Because this visit is for initial candidacy, the Team Report contains pages of advice to the institution. This consulting should not be misread as a list of institutional shortcomings.")

Structure of the Report

Since each institution is unique and every institution is evaluated for candidacy or accreditation in the light of its own mission and purposes, every Team Report is different. But since each evaluation is conducted to examine an institution for the same accrediting purposes and in relation to a common set of Criteria, **every Team Report must:**

- provide certain matters of information;
- clearly evaluate the institution in relation to the Criteria for Accreditation or Candidacy and the General Institutional Requirements;
- conclude with the team's formal recommendation and its rationale for that recommendation.

Because the Commission's mission is also to encourage institutional improvement, each report must:

- offer advice and suggestions to the institution.

The clearest way to address these essential elements is to divide the Team Report into corresponding sections.

The Introduction

A clear introduction provides the reader a context within which to read what follows. This introduction describes:

- the organization of the report;
- the accreditation history of the institution; and
- the structure and scope of this team visit.

The introduction should outline the organization of the Team Report. It should then summarize briefly the institution's accreditation history, specifying when the institution first became affiliated with the Commission and/or when it was first accredited, when it last underwent a comprehensive evaluation, and what (if any) focused evaluations have been conducted since the last comprehensive evaluation.

The introduction should also briefly review how the visit was conducted (i.e., people interviewed, documents reviewed, etc.). This need not be an exhaustive list of names or offices, but should give solid evidence of the completeness of the review.

Finally, the introduction should outline the scope of the visit being described in the Team Report. This scope has been defined by the last official action of the Commission, and is specified in both the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status and the Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet that the team received before the visit. This section of the introduction might say that "this is the report of a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the master's degree-granting level which was conducted for the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education on (dates of the visit)."

Evaluation for Affiliation

The second essential element of every Team Report for candidacy or accreditation is an explicit evaluation of whether the institution fulfills the criteria for the status sought. (See *Handbook*, Chapter II.) There is no prescribed format for the organization of this section of the report. One key point for the team chair to remember as he or she assigns writing responsibilities to team members and, ultimately, writes this section of the report is that it will be crucial to the Commission's decision-making processes after the evaluation visit; therefore, it must be clear and thorough enough to justify the team's recommendation.

In documenting that an institution does or does not satisfy the Criteria for Accreditation or the Criteria for Candidacy, the Team Report need not repeat all of the information that is contained in the institution's Self-Study Report, catalogs, and other materials. In some cases, the team will need to provide extended discussion and documentation to support its conclusions; in others, it will be able to refer readers to other institutional documents and briefly summarize what can be found there. The *Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation* suggests the areas that need to be examined to demonstrate that an institution fulfills the Criteria. In other words, the Team Report need not be a totally self-contained document, but it must summarize clearly the evidence supporting the team's judgments about every part of the Criteria.

The institution's Self-Study Report should contain a discussion of how the institution meets the General Institutional Requirements. The team should examine this, and if it finds that meeting the Requirements is sufficiently well documented in the Self-Study Report, it need only note in the Team Report that conclusion, and refer to the section(s) of the Self-Study Report where details can be found. If, however, the team finds deficiencies with respect to one or more of the Requirements, it must discuss these in the Team Report, and reflect its findings in the team recommendation. **Explicit review of each of the GIRs is required in Team Reports involving evaluations for initial and continued candidacy and initial accreditation.**

For years Team Reports have included lists of "strengths" and "concerns." As distinguished from the team's advice and suggestions, such lists can be a useful summary of the team's findings. But teams should be discriminating in their compilation of such

lists. "Strengths" are emphasized both to commend the institution for them and to encourage it to maintain them; "concerns" are emphasized to indicate those areas that require attention either immediately or in the future. Both "strengths" and "concerns" should be significant. This is not the place for a long exhaustive list of every good point and every problem the team discovered. Such lists tend not to be useful to institutions in establishing priorities for action. The team should attempt to summarize the most salient, distinguishing strengths and concerns.

On the basis of its evaluation the team will recommend accrediting action. If the team has identified certain deficiencies that make it impossible to certify that the institution adequately fulfills the Criteria, it must state those deficiencies clearly in this section of its report. If it believes that, in spite of major deficiencies, *on balance* the institution fulfills the Criteria, it must make clear the bases for this judgment. This section of the report, in other words, should support the recommendation the team makes; careful examination must not find them to be inconsistent.

Advice for Institutional Improvement

As consultants as well as evaluators, evaluation teams are asked to offer advice and suggestions to institutions as well as to evaluate them in relation to the Criteria. A section devoted to such suggestions and advice is an essential element of each report. *Advice should be clearly differentiated from the team's evaluation of the institution in relation to the Criteria. The Report should state explicitly that the section is advisory, and that making any changes or improvements mentioned is not a requirement of the institution's candidacy or accreditation.* Concerns that affect the institution's ability to fulfill the Criteria or the GIRs belong in the second section of the report; suggested ways to resolve those and other unrelated concerns belong in the third.

As experienced educators, team members can often offer valuable counsel to an institution. As outsiders they can sometimes bring an objective perspective to bear on a difficulty that the institution has not been able to clarify for itself. Teams are encouraged to offer this counsel and perspective whenever they can and to keep this section of the Team Report in mind during their meetings on campus.

A team's suggestions vary with the institution it visits and with the type of comprehensive evaluation it has been asked to conduct. Few fixed rules can be provided by the Commission for what should be included in this section. However, the Commission does recommend the following guidelines.

- Avoid rhetorical questions (e.g., "The organization of the College requires the president to make all decisions. Is this really satisfactory?") Either raise concerns directly (e.g., "The organizational structure of the college does not provide line officers with enough decision-making authority") or make clear suggestions for change (e.g., "We suggest that the college's organizational plan place explicit responsibility for day-to-day decisions with the line officers, and that the president should review the effects of those decisions each month.")

- Be both honest and tactful. The Report should not mention individuals, for example, but should refer instead to positions: "the Academic Dean," not "Dean Jones."

- Avoid comments and suggestions concerning personalities within the institution ("The president's administrative style is interesting and unconventional,") even when the comments are laudatory ("The Dean of Students is doing an excellent job.") Teams should be wary of characterizing the way various persons get along with each other ("The Deans seldom communicate with each other.") The short duration of the team visit does not really allow the team to arrive at a thorough knowledge of the activities of most individuals within the institution, so it is better to relate comments and suggestions to organizational elements within the institution ("There appears to be a good rapport between student leaders and the office of the Dean of Students.")

- Avoid prescribing—as opposed to suggesting—specific solutions to problems ("The student personnel office is overworked, and an Associate Dean of Students must be appointed immediately.") Specific prescriptions are the elements of advice that are most often confused with accreditation requirements by institutions and readers.

- Do not propose that the institution meet standards or use guidelines of other agencies ("The College should seek NCATE accreditation.") It is appropriate to point out that the lack of specialized accreditation sometimes handicaps graduates.

If an institution chose to emphasize special emphases in its self-study, the Team Report should speak directly to those topics. In such cases, the Team Report might be more pointed and specific than normal, for the institution, in choosing to emphasize special topics, has also sought from the team a response to and analysis of what was accomplished. Usually it is still important that the Team Report clearly distinguishes between the bases for the accrediting recommendation and the consulting advice sought by the institution. But when an institution and the Commission have agreed to a comprehensive evaluation with special emphases, the team should feel comfortable in shaping a report that is lengthier than normal in its consulting advice and shorter than normal in the statement of its evidence supporting the accrediting recommendation.

The Team Recommendation

The last part of every Team Report is the team's recommendation for Commission action and its rationale for that recommendation. This final section should have three related parts:

- a brief, standard recommendation sentence;

- a rationale; and

- a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status.

The Recommendation Sentence. The recommendation sentence, which is to begin the final section of the Team Report, should follow one of two simple models. A positive recommendation sentence for a comprehensive evaluation should read:

> **The team's recommendations for action, including its recommendation to (grant/continue) the (candidacy/accreditation) of College X, are shown on the attached Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. The team's reasons for its recommendations are:**

A negative recommendation sentence for a comprehensive evaluation should read:

> **The team recommends that the (candidacy/accreditation) of College X be (denied/withdrawn) for the following reasons:**

The Rationale. The recommendation sentence is to be followed by a section in which the team clearly states its reasons for each of its specific recommendations. The team does this by discussing its suggested version of the Statement of Affiliation Status. If the team recommendation is that a part of the current SAS be altered, it must clearly explain its reasons for recommending the suggested alteration. If the team's recommended version of a part of the SAS differs from the institution's requested version, the team will want to take special care in explaining its rationale.

Essentially, the team's rationale for each of its recommendations will be a summary judgment supported by reference to the salient points discussed in the Team Report.

Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. The team indicates its recommendations by specifying the wording it suggests for **each** part of the SAS. If it recommends a change in the current wording, it specifies that change, using the wording discussed below, in the space provided on the SAS Worksheet; if it recommends no change in the current wording, it indicates that by writing **"NO CHANGE"** in the appropriate space. A sample Worksheet appears as Appendix G of this *Manual*. (Also see *Handbook*, Chapter III, and page 19 of this *Manual*.)

In making recommendations concerning the first two parts of the SAS—the **Name** and **Control**—the team's choices should be clear. In deciding on its recommendations and rationale for the remaining parts of the SAS, the team faces more complicated choices.

STATUS. The first and most important decision the team must make is whether the institution should be granted or continued in candidacy or accreditation status. The **Status** portion of the Worksheet is the place where this decision is recorded. (*Note:* This section may be altered by a focused visit team only if probation is being recommended.) The Worksheet describes the institution's current status and notes any changes that the institution has requested.

The team may make one of four possible recommendations concerning the institution's status:

- **that candidacy or accreditation be granted or continued.** The team recommends this if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that the institution meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation or the Criteria for Candidacy. The team summarizes its reasons for this positive decision in the rationale section of its report. The team reflects its recommendation on the SAS Worksheet.

  John Dewey College is (accredited by/a candidate for accreditation with) the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

- **that accreditation be continued with probation.** The team recommends this if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that while the institution currently meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation, specific and vital changes are necessary for it to continue to meet them. (The Commission's policy on probation appears on pp. 41-42 of the *Handbook*.) The team summarizes within the rationale section of its report its reasons for this recommendation by detailing the areas of concern that need to be improved. It records its recommendation by (a) adding the note that **"College X is on probation"** to the Status portion of the SAS Worksheet, and specifying the specific conditions that led to the probation, and (b) the date for the institution's next comprehensive evaluation, at which time the institution must provide clear evidence of its progress toward ameliorating those conditions.

- **that accreditation be denied but candidacy be continued.** The team recommends this if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that an institution applying for accreditation **before** the expiration of its candidacy period does not meet the Criteria for Accreditation but continues to meet the Criteria for Candidacy and the General Institutional Requirements. The team summarizes its reasons for this recommendation in the rationale section of its report. The team's recommendation that the institution's candidacy should remain the same is reflected on the SAS Worksheet by specifying **"NO CHANGE"** in the Status section. (In exceptional cases, the team may choose to recommend that an institution applying for accreditation at *the end* of its candidacy period be denied accreditation but that its candidacy be extended for a limited time.)

- **that candidacy or accreditation be denied or withdrawn.** The team recommends this if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that the institution does not meet the General Institutional Requirements and the appropriate Criteria. In this case, the team is recommending that the institution be denied initial affiliation or that continued affiliation be withdrawn and, therefore, that the institution no longer have a Statement of Affiliation Status. Should the team make this determination, its recommendation sentence will be the one noted earlier; its reasons for this recommendation will be explained in the rationale section of its report; and it will indicate **"NONE"** in the Status section of the SAS Worksheet and **"NOT APPLICABLE"** in every other section.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. This part of the SAS describes the institution's degree programs. (For a description of the categorization of degree types used in this section of the SAS, see *A Handbook of Accreditation*, Chapter III.) It should also note that the institution offers courses for credit outside of its degree programs if such notation is required by the policy on "Institutional Offering of Credit Courses Not Part of Degree Programs," and indicates if the institution offers non-credit courses as a substantial component of its educational program. The team's recommendation concerning this part of the SAS will either be to retain the current version or to change it based upon information gathered during the visit or upon the institution's request. (Under the Commission's change policy, institutions will need Commission approval before adding degree types *not* listed here. The team should make sure, therefore, that its listing is accurate and complete.) An Educational Programs section might read:

> **The College offers programs leading to the Bachelor's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degrees and Master's (professional curricula) degrees. It also offers credit courses not part of these degree programs.**

LOCATIONS. This part of the SAS should note the institution's main campus (or office), any location that has a full-time administrator assigned to it, and any other location the team believes should be listed specifically. This part of the SAS may also generally identify locations where the institution offers various programs. (For further information on the listing of locations, see *Handbook*, Chapter III.)

Some institutions open and close off-campus sites regularly. The team has the responsibility to recommend whether and how the sites that are not required to be listed specifically should be reflected in the SAS:

- If the institution appears to have policies and procedures for managing such sites well, and if these policies and procedures appear to be working, the team may choose to recommend that the Commission allow the institution wide latitude in making changes in locations. In such situations the team recommends general wording, e.g., "The College also offers some courses at various sites within the state."

- If, on the other hand, the team believes that the institution should **not** be free to open and close these off-campus sites without Commission review, it should list each of the current sites in this part of the SAS Worksheet. Such a listing will require the institution to be examined under the Commission's "Policy on Changes Affecting the Affiliation Status of an Institution" before it changes these sites or adds others. (See *Handbook*, Chapter VI.)

- If the team does not wish to invoke the change process for changes in location-sthat must be listed specifically, it may include under the Stipulations section such wording as, "Locations may be added or dropped provided the Commission is informed before the action is taken." When such wording is used and a location

is changed staff will alter the SAS to conform to the new configuration, reporting such alteration as information not requiring Commission action.

The team summarizes its reasons for the listing of locations in the rationale section of its report. An example for listing locations on the SAS is:

> **The College offers courses and programs at its campus in Chicago, Illinois; some courses and some programs are also offered at Moline and Galena, Illinois. Some courses are offered at various locations within Illinois.**

In this example:

Chicago is the home campus and so is shown specifically;

Either Moline and Galena have full-time administrators and so must be shown specifically or by listing them specifically the team is limiting the college's expansion;

the various locations within the state are shown generally;

note the wording "some courses and some programs;" not only does it indicate that not all courses and programs are available at every location, but is also says that complete degree programs are available at Moline and Galena.

STIPULATIONS. The team may recommend any stipulations that it finds and justifies. Some stipulations, as described above, are permissive. Many stipulations place limits on the development of new activities or new programs within the degree types specified in the Educational Programs portion of the SAS; limits on the size, extent or location of certain of the institution's activities (e.g., the limitation that a particular doctoral degree program may only be offered at one site), and so forth. The team summarizes its reasons for these recommendations in the rationale section of its report and notes them on the SAS Worksheet by indicating that

> **The College's (accreditation/candidacy) is limited to (nature of limitation).**

REPORTS DUE. The team may recommend that the institution be required to file reports with the office of the Commission between evaluations if it finds and documents that such reports are warranted. In deciding to require reports, the team must respect the following guidelines:

- the topic(s) to be addressed in a report must be clear, specific, and preferably no more than three in number;
- the subject(s) of the report(s) must be able to be evaluated on the basis of written materials alone and must not require an evaluation visit to be verified;
- a specific date on which the report is to be filed must be indicated in the recommendation;

- no more than three reports may be recommended by any team (multiple reports on a single topic are considered one report).

The team may ask that a report be filed for a number of reasons: to provide information only, to monitor how an institution is progressing in coping with certain changes or concerns, or to allow Commission staff to determine whether a focused evaluation should be conducted. The team should specify in the **rationale section** of its report which of these purposes is behind its recommendation. It is especially important that the team specify how the report should be used. It may want to indicate **in its rationale**, for example, that a report should be filed on a certain date and that "unless the report shows ... then ... ." The team should clearly explain the basis for evaluating the report and the actions that the report should trigger.

The team reflects its recommendations on the institution's SAS Worksheet by noting that

> **The College is to file a report by November 1, 1993, focused on: 1) opening Fall enrollments from 1991-93; and 2) the trend in the Current Fund Balance from June 30, 1991, to June 30, 1993.**

FOCUSED EVALUATIONS. The team may recommend that one or more focused evaluations be conducted before the next comprehensive evaluation if it finds and documents that such evaluations are warranted. If it decides that a focused evaluation is necessary, the subject(s) of the focused evaluation(s) must be specific, clear, and **limited** in number.

The team specifies in the rationale section of its report the reasons for the focused visit and any specific comments related to the focused visit. The team reflects its recommendation on the SAS Worksheet by noting that

> **The College is scheduled for an evaluation in 1995-96 focused on the success of the College in improving its financial condition and its development at the graduate level.**

For additional information on the focused evaluation, see Chapter V of the *Guide* and Chapter VII of this *Manual*.

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION. The team must recommend a time for the next comprehensive evaluation. Commission policy requires that a comprehensive evaluation be scheduled no later than **five years** after an institution is granted **initial** accreditation, and that every institution affiliated with the Commission must undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least every **ten** years. Candidates for Accreditation must be evaluated **biennially** during their candidacy period. The fact that focused evaluations may occur between comprehensive evaluations does not affect these minimum guidelines.

Nothing is so misunderstood as the dating of comprehensive evaluations, and the team bears the burden of providing a concise and convincing explanation for its recommendation. When making its decision about the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the team should consider the following questions:

- When should the Commission next review the accreditability of the institution?
- What compelling factors exist that would indicate that the institution should undergo a comprehensive evaluation in less than ten years?

If the institution is experiencing some significant problems that need immediate attention, then a comprehensive evaluation might be called for within the next five years. If, however, the institution is basically sound, but facing the same uncertainties confronted by most institutions, then the decennial cycle is probably most appropriate. Increasingly, evaluation teams are placing comprehensive evaluations on the decennial cycle and using reports or focused visits to provide appropriate Commission monitoring.

In addition, the teams should keep in mind that, while most comprehensive evaluations are scheduled for fixed times, the Commission reserves the right to reschedule the time of the next evaluation visit to an earlier date or to call for a report or an evaluation to respond to changes that occur within an institution. Chapter V of the *Handbook* describes the various means by which the Commission continues to monitor affiliated institutions between comprehensive evaluations.

The team explains its reasons for recommending the number of years it does in the **rationale section** of its report. It reflects its recommendation on the SAS Worksheet by noting that

> **John Dewey College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1990-91. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 2000-01.**

The Format of the Team Report

The Team Report should be typed, double-spaced, on 8-1/2 x 11 paper. The title page should follow the format of the sample in Appendix F. A Table of Contents is also useful in many reports. The name of the institution should appear at the top left of each page, the page number at the top right. Left-hand margins should be wide enough to allow for holes to be punched so that the report may be placed in a binder. The team chair should send the Commission the **original** of the final report with the SAS Worksheet attached. Because Commission processes often require multiple copies, the clear original must be in the Commission files. The Commission staff will retype the SAS Worksheet recommendations for the final report. In recent years the Commission has experienced difficulties with Team Reports that are produced on certain types of dot-matrix printers. When a printer is used in the preparation of a report, care should be take to ensure that the quality of the print will permit clear, readable photocopies.

The Draft Team Report

As explained earlier, team members submit their written contributions to the Team Report to the team chair either at the end of the visit or within a week after it. When all of these written materials have been received, the team chair prepares the draft report.

The draft should be completed and distributed to the team, the institution, and the Commission staff by the team chair **within one month** of the visit. The draft report should include the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status which contains the team's recommendation.

The draft should be clearly marked on the title page **"Draft for correction of errors of fact only—for internal distribution at the discretion of the Executive Officer."** The team chairperson then mails a copy of the draft report for comments and corrections to the Executive Officer of the institution, the members of the team, and the Commission staff member who has coordinated the visit. The team members should notify the chair immediately if changes are needed so the final report can be produced on schedule. The chair should set a firm date by which the institution and the team members must respond and, barring exceptional circumstances, should hold to that date.

The Final Team Report

After receiving the comments of the Executive Officer, the team members, and the Commission staff, the team chair prepares the final Team Report. If the comments suggest that substantive changes in the draft may be required, the team chair may need to confer by telephone with the members of the team before preparing the final version. The Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status incorporating any changes in wording that have been suggested by the staff is attached to the final Team Report. When the final report is completed, the team chair sends it to the Commission staff liaison. The final Team Report is due in the office of the Commission **no more than seven weeks after the visit.**

The Commission office duplicates the final report and mails four copies of it to the Executive Officer and one copy to each member of the team. Additional copies are prepared for later distribution by the Commission during the review processes.

VI

The Review Processes

The next step in the evaluation process following the team visit is the review process. The Commission has established two processes for the review of institutional evaluations: the **Readers' Panel** and the **Review Committee.** Review Committee consideration is **required** if the evaluation is for either initial candidacy or initial accreditation, or if the team recommends imposing or removing probation. Institutions undergoing evaluations for continued candidacy or accreditation or focused evaluations choose the process they prefer. If there is no substantial disagreement between the institution and the team concerning the team recommendations, the institution typically chooses the Readers' Panel; if there is, it asks to be considered by a Review Committee. In considering whether to choose the Review Committee process it is important that the institution understand clearly that Review Committees can alter team recommendations; they cannot alter the contents of the Team Report.

Institutional Response to the Team Report

The Executive Officer of the institution reviews the Team Report, including the team's recommendation, and makes a formal written response to the Commission staff member. This response serves the institution in the review processes by providing an institutional commentary on the findings of the team. In evaluations for continued candidacy, continued accreditation, and focused visits, it also serves as the institution's selection of review processes.

With the final report the Executive Officer also receives from the Commission a form on which the institution c[illegible]valuate the effectiveness of the total accreditation process, from the training programs available at the Annual Meeting through the usefulness of the Team Report. The Commission uses the forms to assist in its own self-assessment and improvement; the forms are confidential and are not placed in the institution's file.

The institution's response, which is shared with the team, becomes part of the written record of the evaluation and is forwarded to the Readers' Panel and/or the Review

Committee, and, if appropriate, to the Commission. As a part of the official record of the visit, it is shared with the next evaluation team.

The institution's response should be received by the Commission **within two weeks** of receipt of the final Team Report. If an institution wishes more time to respond, it should contact the Commission staff immediately.

The Readers' Panel

A Readers' Panel composed of three Accreditation Review Council members conducts an independent review of all written materials resulting from an evaluation. Readers receive copies of the Team Report from the Commission. When it receives the names of panel members from the Commission, the **institution** sends each of them a complete set of its materials, including its response to the Team Report.

The Readers' Panel process has one purpose: to determine whether further discussion with a Review Committee is likely to lead to alteration of the team's Statement of Affiliation Status recommendation. The Readers cannot alter the Team Report or its recommendation. An institution selecting the Readers' Panel process cannot request changes in the team recommendation.

In making their judgments, Readers consider the following questions:

- Is the team's recommendation adequately supported by factual information in the Team Report and the institution's documents?
- Do the institution's report and supporting documents contain information that is not addressed in the Team Report, and which might significantly affect the recommendation for action?
- Does the institution's response indicate significant disagreement with the team's recommendation, making further review desirable?
- Does the institution's response contain significant new information that is likely to change the recommendation?

If at least two of the three readers believe that Review Committee consideration is **not** likely to lead to alteration of the team's recommendation, it is forwarded directly to the Commission for action. The Commission then has the option of accepting the team's recommendation or referring the institution to a Review Committee for further consideration.

If at least two of the three readers believe that Review Committee consideration is likely to lead to alteration of the team's recommendation, the institution is scheduled to appear at a Review Committee session for further consideration.

At the conclusion of the Readers' Panel process, the team chair is informed of the Readers' responses.

The Review Committee

Review Committees consider all institutions required to go through this process, all those that choose it, and all those referred to a Review Committee by the Readers' Panel or the Commission. A Review Committee must have at least seven members, a majority of whom should be Council members. The team chair is asked to appear with the Executive Officer of the institution before the Committee to discuss the institution's materials, the evaluation visit, and the team's report and recommendation. If the evaluation is considered by a Review Committee and the team chair is unable to attend, a team member will be asked to represent the team at the session.

Before the Review Committee meeting the Commission office provides the institution with the names of the Committee's members. The institution sends each Committee member a complete set of institutional materials; the Commission sends each a copy of the Team Report. If the institution has been referred to the Review Committee by a Readers' Panel, the Commission also sends Committee members copies of the Readers' comments. Before the Review Committee meeting, the institution may add any other written information it believes the Committee should have to evaluate the team's recommendation. Written materials cannot be presented at the Review Committee meeting.

Through studying the documents connected with the evaluation visit and through discussion with the team chair and the Executive Officer, the Review Committee judges whether the evaluation team's recommendation is well-founded in fact, is fair, and is in agreement with the policies and procedures of the Commission. When there is a disagreement between the institution and the team, the Committee seeks to understand and resolve it.

During this meeting, the institution and the team chair have an opportunity to make brief oral presentations and to answer the questions of the Review Committee's members. Audio-visual presentations are not permitted. The Review Committee members may ask the team chair to elaborate on something in the Team Report, to explain the deliberations that led to a particular recommendation, or to react to institutional materials that may have been submitted in response to the Team Report.

The Review Committee then meets in closed session to consider the information it has gained. It recommends either support or alteration of the team's recommendation and provides written reasons for its recommendation.

Following the Review Committee sessions, the Review Committee's recommendation and rationale are communicated to the team chair and the Executive Officer. Both are invited to respond in writing. Should a Review Committee change the team recommendation, the team chair may choose to poll the team before sending a response. If

there is disagreement by the team and/or the institution with the Review Committee recommendation, these comments are presented to the Commission along with the institution's materials, the Team Report and recommendation, and the Review Committee's recommendation.

If the Review Committee recommends support of the team's recommendation, then the Commission has the option of adopting the recommendation or referring it to a Review Committee for further consideration. If the Review Committee recommends changes in the team's recommendation, the Commission has the option of accepting or altering the team and Review Committee recommendations. The Commission's action is communicated to the team chair and the team members shortly after it is taken.

At the conclusion of the review process, the team chair's responsibilities for this assignment end.

VII

Focused Evaluations

The information on planning, conducting and reporting the results of a team visit that appears in the preceding pages of this *Manual* is necessary reading for every team undertaking any evaluation for the Commission. Focused evaluations alter the scope of the institution's preparation and materials for the visit, as well as the nature of the team's evaluation and report. As Chapter V of *A Handbook of Accreditation* explains, focused evaluations occur between comprehensive evaluations and examine only certain aspects of an institution. They are meant to monitor developments, changes or concerns between comprehensive visits. In most respects, the policies and procedures governing focused evaluations are similar to those governing comprehensive evaluations; however, there are a number of significant differences.

Charge to the Team

The first of these differences is that the role of the evaluation team is different from that of a team conducting a comprehensive evaluation. The focused evaluation team is not charged with evaluating whether an institution fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation; nor is it empowered to recommend that candidacy or accreditation be granted, continued or denied. It can, in special circumstances, recommend that the sanction of probation be applied. Its basic role is to evaluate the areas specified as the focus of the visit and to provide the Commission with a progress report on developments at the institution since the last comprehensive evaluation. However, if matters outside the focus of the visit come to the attention of the team it should note these, recommending changes in the Statement of Affiliation Status if necessary to deal with these additional areas (e.g., modifying current wording or calling for a report or a focused visit). The focused evaluation team does not simply monitor. The team may recommend that a program, site or other operation be restricted or even discontinued.

Planning the Visit

In preparing for a focused evaluation, an institution does not undertake a full-scale self-study; nor does it produce a Self-Study Report of the kind referred to in the

Commission's *Handbook* and *Guide*. Instead it prepares a focused report that addresses the areas to be evaluated. (For further information on the focused report, see Chapter V of *A Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation.)*

Before the visit, the Commission sends team members an Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet, a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status, and copies of the official record of the most recent comprehensive evaluation and any subsequent official interactions with the Commission. The institution sends each member of the team a copy of its focused report and any supporting materials it believes the team should have before arriving on campus, including catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, and relevant portions of the Commission's Basic Institutional Data Forms.

The team chair proceeds as he or she would for a comprehensive evaluation: by initiating contact with the institution and the team, coordinating arrangements for the visit, and communicating the plan for the visit to both the institution and the team members.

Conducting the Visit

Focused evaluations are usually two-day visits. At the first team meeting on the evening before the visit is officially schedule to begin, the chairperson reviews the purpose of the visit; formulates final assignments; and covers the other relevant parts of the outline discussed in Chapter IV. The focused evaluation team is principally concerned with the aspects specified for the focused evaluation (e.g., enrollment patterns, finances, building program, curriculum development, specific requests for institutional change). Therefore, the data needed by the team are circumscribed. The team's time on campus is limited, and it will need to direct its energies primarily toward gathering the data it needs for dealing with the areas of focus. Its fundamental purposes are to determine whether the institution has addressed the areas of concern and to assess the impact of significant changes related to them.

Writing the Report

The team summarizes its findings concerning these matters in a written report. While every Team Report of a focused evaluation is different, each must contain four essential elements. Three of these elements are the same as those in a comprehensive report; one is different. Every focused report must:

- provide certain matters of information;
- assess the areas of focus;
- offer advice and suggestions to the institution;
- conclude with the team's formal recommendation and its rationale for that recommendation.

The first and third of these essential elements are identical to those discussed at length in Chapter V of this *Manual;* the second essential element of a focused report differs from that of a comprehensive report because of the differences in purpose between comprehensive and focused evaluations; the fourth essential element is basically the same as that discussed in Chapter V.

If the focused visit was **required by a previous evaluation,** the team's responsibility is to assess whether the institution has made progress in the areas and to report significant developments since the last Commission visit. If the focused evaluation was prompted by a **proposed change in the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status,** the team's responsibility is to evaluate whether the proposed change should be approved. (For further information on institutional change, see Chapter VI of *A Handbook of Accreditation.*) This section of its report should be detailed enough to allow readers to understand the most important changes the institution has undergone or is planning, and to evaluate how well the institution has responded to previous Commission concerns.

Like the report of a comprehensive evaluation, the report of a focused evaluation concludes with a fourth essential element: the team's recommendation. And, like the comprehensive Team Report, the focused report's recommendation has a standard recommendation sentence, a rationale, and a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status.

The recommendation sentence for every focused evaluation is the same:

> **The team's recommendations for action concerning College X are shown on the attached Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. The reasons for the team's recommendations are:**

The recommendation sentence is followed by a section in which the team states its **rationale** for each of its specific recommendations. The team does this by discussing its suggested version of the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. Since an institution's accreditation with the Commission can only be altered as a result of a comprehensive evaluation, the only recommendation the focused evaluation team may make concerning the Status section of the Worksheet is a recommendation of probation. It may recommend changes in any of the other sections of the SAS; in each case, it follows the guidelines discussed in Chapter V.

Review Processes and Commission Action

Like the comprehensive evaluation, focused visits must pass through a review process before final action is taken by the Commission. Institutions undergoing focused visits may choose the process they prefer. The review processes of the Commission are discussed in Chapter IV of the *Handbook* and Chapter VI of this *Manual.*

VIII

Special Cases

Pre-Visits

Pre-visits are usually not necessary. However, if special features about an institution or its evaluation appear to require extensive pre-planning before the team visit, the chairperson and the Executive Officer may decide that a pre-visit is desirable. Such visits normally last only one day. The chairperson makes the final decision about conducting a pre-visit after consulting with the Commission staff. The institution is billed separately for the cost of the pre-visit by the Commission office. (See *Handbook*, Appendix A.)

A pre-visit is devoted to establishing the details of the evaluation plan. The team chair examines the institution's logistical or programmatic particularities, and develops an understanding of its atmosphere and style so that the team can later approach its evaluation with a minimum of lost time and a maximum of effectiveness.

The team chair reviews the institution's Self-Study Report as a part of the pre-visit to determine whether any additional information may be needed by the team. The chairperson also checks on practical arrangements for the visit and confirms appointments with members of the institution's state or local governing board(s).

As soon as the pre-visit is finished, the team chair mails an expense voucher for the trip to the Commission office for reimbursement. At the same time, the chairperson should contact the Commission staff liaison if the pre-visit has indicated that there may be significant omissions or imbalances in the team or if preparations for the evaluation appear to be at variance with the information the Commission has provided.

Sequential Visits

In most cases, visits to institutions with off-campus programs or sites follow the patterns described earlier in this *Manual*. Establishing the logistics of the visit may

require a pre-visit by the team chair, and conducting the evaluation may involve team members separating for part of the visit to examine different sites—but the basic structure of the team visit remains the same.

In some cases, however, an institution may have so many sites, so widely dispersed within and outside of its home state, the North Central region, and/or the United States that a sequential visit conducted over a longer period of time is required for a thorough evaluation of the institution and its operations. Sequential visits require that the Commission and the institution agree on an appropriate evaluation design and that team members be willing to commit themselves to a longer period of time away from their home campuses than is required for other types of visits. Team members who agree to serve on sequential visits receive additional information on the particulars of the visit from the Commission staff. Fees for sequential evaluations are billed on a cost-plus basis. (See *Handbook*, Appendix A.)

International Visits

The Commission has mandated that on-site visits must be conducted for certain international education programs and sites (see *Handbook*, Chapter VI). Because of the unique nature of international visits, the Commission has developed a separate "Practical Guide for Organizing and Conducting International Evaluation Visits." to assist institutions and teams in planning for and conducting these visits. Fees for international visits are billed on a cost-plus basis. (See *Handbook*, Appendix A.)

Interregional Visits

In an interregional team visit, the Commission visits a site outside the North Central region and includes on the team representatives from the institutional accrediting association in whose region the site is located. The Commission retains full responsibility for these visits, including composing the team, establishing the procedures for the visit, and taking final accrediting action. The Commission regards its Team Report as the only official report of the visit and sends a copy of it to the other regional association as well as to the institution. The institution is billed for all team members in accordance with the Commission's fee schedule. (See *Handbook*, Appendix A.)

Joint Visits

In a joint accrediting team visit, the Commission and another accrediting body together name a single team that prepares a single written report. The Commission and the other accrediting agency develop an agreement which outlines procedures and processes for the visit; the institution requesting a joint visit accepts the agreement. In some cases the team will be chaired and the final report written by an evaluator from the other association; in others, the Commission will appoint the chair. In either case, *each*

accrediting body makes its accrediting decision separately. Commission policy restricts joint accrediting team visits with other COPA-recognized institutional accrediting bodies to those which accredit institutions primarily offering postbaccalaureate programs in a single discipline. The institution is billed separately for each organization's participation.

Generalist Visits

At the request of the institution, the Commission staff will assign a person to serve as a Generalist during the evaluation visit to the institution by a COPA-recognized specialized accrediting body. The role of the Generalist is to assist the team in approaching its task within the overall context of the institution. The institution is billed for the Generalist's participation by the Commission. (See *Handbook*, Appendix A.)

Confirmation/Advisory Visits

From time to time an institution asks that the Commission conduct a visit required by some other external agency. For example, some branches of the military, some state agencies, and some foreign countries require as a part of their formal approval processes a site visit by a regional accrediting agency. When a site visit is not required by the Commission itself, the Commission cooperates by sending a team which will write a confirmation report for the institution to submit to the proper authorities. Occasionally the Commission may suggest that an institution host a team charged with advising the Commissioners about significant changes at the institution. Confirmation/Advisory visits do not require official Commission action and, therefore, do not involve any processes beyond providing a report to the institution. The institution is billed for the confirmation visit by the Commission. (See *Handbook*, Appendix A.)

APPENDIX A

The General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria

The General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation and Candidacy are reprinted here for convenient reference. They are discussed in detail in Chapter II of *A Handbook of Accreditation* and in Chapter III of *A Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation*.

General Institutional Requirements

An institution affiliated with the Commission by either accreditation or candidacy has to meet the following Requirements:

MISSION AND AUTHORIZATION

1.a. The institution has formally adopted and made public its statement of mission.

1.b. The statement of mission is appropriate to an institution of higher education.

1.c. The institution confers certificates, diplomas or degrees.

1.d. The institution has legal authority to confer its certificates, diplomas and degrees.

1.e. The institution meets all legal requirements to operate wherever it conducts activities.

2.a. The educational programs are compatible with the institution's mission.

2.b. The principal educational programs are based on recognized fields of study at the postsecondary level.

2.c. At least one of the undergraduate programs is two or more academic years in length (or the equivalent). If no undergraduate programs are offered, at least one of the graduate programs is one or more academic years in length (or the equivalent).

2.d. General education at the postsecondary level is an essential element of undergraduate degree programs and a prerequisite to graduate degree programs.

2.e. General education and/or a program of related instruction at the postsecondary level is an essential element of undergraduate certificate and diploma programs two or more academic years in length.

2.f. The certificate, diploma or degree awarded upon successful completion of an educational program is appropriate to the demonstrated attainment of the graduate.

INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION

3.a. There is a governing board, legally responsible for the institution, which establishes and regularly reviews basic policies that govern the institution and protect its integrity.

3.b. The governing board includes individuals who represent the public interest. (Note: In rare situations the Commission may approve alternative means by which the interests of the public are appropriately represented when unusual circumstances prohibit public representatives on the board.)

3.c. An executive officer is designated by the governing board to administer the institution.

3.d. A faculty comprising persons qualified by education and experience is significantly involved in the development and review of the educational programs.

3.e. Admissions policies are consistent with the institution's mission and appropriate to the educational programs.

3.f. Admissions practices conform to the admissions policies.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

4.a. The institution has financial resources sufficient to support its activities.

4.b. The institution has its financial statements externally audited on a regular schedule by a certified public accountant or state audit agency.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

5.a. The institution publishes in its catalog or other appropriate places accurate information that fairly describes

i. its educational programs,
ii. its policies and procedures directly affecting students,
iii. its charges and its refund policies,
iv. the academic credentials of its faculty members and administrators.

5.b. The institution makes available upon request accurate information that fairly describes its financial resources.

The Criteria for Accreditation

An accredited institution fulfills four Criteria:

1. it has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution;

2. it has effectively organized adequate human, financial and physical resources into educational and other programs to accomplish its purposes;

3. it is accomplishing its purposes;

4. it can continue to accomplish its purposes.

The Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation

A candidate for accreditation fulfills four Criteria:

1. it has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution;

2. it has effectively organized adequate human, financial and physical resources into educational and other programs so that it is accomplishing its immediate purposes;

3. it is following realistic plans to acquire and organize any additional resources needed to accomplish its stated purposes;

4. it has the potential to achieve accreditation within the candidacy period.

APPENDIX B

A Sample Timeline for the Evaluation Process

Before the Visit

23-29 months before

- Commission notifies institution of scheduled evaluation
- Institution initiates planning for self-study process

21-27 months before

- Institution notifies Commission of its self-study coordinator, its preferred dates for the visit, and any proposed changes in its Statement of Affiliation Status
- Institution appoints Self-Study Steering Committee

18-24 months before

- Institution sends representatives to the Self-Study Institute

20 months before

- Steering Committee develops a self-study plan and submits it to Commission staff for review
- Steering Committee organizes and selects principal subcommittees
- Sub-committees gather data, interview, analyze, and develop draft reports for submission to the Steering Committee

12-17 months before

- Commission sends one-year reminder letter to institution, confirms dates of visit, provides Basic Institutional Data Forms

11-16 months before

- Institution sends Commission information on team competencies

10 months before

- Steering Committee analyzes information prepared, completes studies, prepares rough draft of Self-Study Report

6-12 months before

- Commission sends a list of proposed team members and an Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet to institution

4-10 months before

- Commission notifies institution and team that team is complete
- Steering Committee circulates and receives reactions to draft report

6 months before

- Editor compiles final Self-Study Report
- Team chair contacts institution to make arrangements for evaluation visit

3 months before

- Institution completes duplication of Self-Study Report, completes BIDs, etc.

2 months before

- Institution sends one complete set of evaluation materials to the Commission

1 month before

- Institution sends one complete set of evaluation materials to each member of the evaluation team
- Commission sends to team and institution materials for the visit including the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status

0 months before

- The visit takes place

After the Visit

1 month after

- Team chair completes draft of Team Report and circulates it for corrections of errors of fact

1 1/2 months after

- Team chair completes final Team Report and submits it to the Commission

2 months after

- Commission duplicates Team Report and sends copies to the institution and the team

2 1/2 months after

- Institution sends response to Team Report to Commission and team and (if it has a choice) chooses the review process it prefers

2-5 months after

- ***Review Process-Readers' Panel:***

  Commission sends names of readers to institution and sends Team Report to each Reader

  Institution sends Self-Study Report, BIDs, institutional catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, and response to Team Report to each Reader

- ***Review Process-Review Committee:***

  Commission sends Review Committee schedule and names of Committee members to institution and team chair and sends Team Report to Review Committee members

  Institution sends each Review Committee member Self-Study Report, BIDs, institutional response, and any other information it believes is relevant

  Institutional and team representatives meet with the Review Committee

3-8 months after

- Commission action

APPENDIX C

Institutional Materials for the Evaluation

MATERIALS TO BE SENT BY THE INSTITUTION

to the Commission staff
at least two months before the evaluation visit
(one set)

- the appropriate report (Self-Study Report, Focused Report)
- completed Basic Institutional Data Forms*
- latest institutional catalog(s)
- faculty and student handbooks

MATERIALS TO BE SENT BY THE INSTITUTION

directly to each member of the evaluation team
one month before the on-site visit
(one set to each team member)

- the appropriate report (Self-Study Report, Focused Report)
- completed Basic Institutional Data Forms*
- latest institutional catalog(s)
- faculty and student handbooks

MATERIALS TO BE SET ASIDE IN AN OFFICE ON CAMPUS

for use by the evaluation team

- charter and/or formal authority from an appropriate government agency in each jurisdiction in which the institution operates authorizing it to award a certificate, diploma or degree at the level at which accreditation (or candidacy) is sought
- information about the institution's governing board, including a roster of members, minutes of Board meetings, etc.
- bylaws or statutes of the institution

- budget for current year
- major institutional reports and records, such as minutes of faculty meetings, the chief executive officer's annual reports, etc.
- reports submitted to, and evaluation team reports received from, professional accrediting agencies in the last five years
- summary data regarding faculty teaching loads
- summary data regarding the number and size-range of classes
- collective bargaining agreement
- institutional advertising directed at prospective students

MATERIALS TO BE SENT BY THE INSTITUTION

to each member of the Readers' Panel or Review Committee that will consider its evaluation

(three sets for the Readers' Panel; up to twelve sets for the Review Committee)

- the appropriate report (Self-Study Report, Focused Report)
- completed Basic Institutional Data Forms*
- latest institutional catalog(s)
- faculty and student handbooks
- institutional response to the Team Report

The Commission will send the names and addresses of the reviewers to the institution after the final Team Report and institutional response have been received. The Commission forwards copies of the Team Report.

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* The full set of BIDs is not required for a focused visit unless it is pertinent to the visit's scope.

APPENDIX D

Sample Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet

8/15/90

NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
159 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60601

EVALUATION VISIT SUMMARY SHEET

INSTITUTION: John Dewey College
1100 South State Street
Chicago, IL 60605

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Jane E. Jones, President
(312) 942-6060 Ext. 25

SELF-STUDY COORDINATOR: Dr. Steven J. Doe, Academic Dean (Ext. 20)

ENROLLMENT: 600 (FTE)

TYPE OF EVALUATION: A comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the Master's (professional) degree-granting level

DATE OF VISIT: January 27-29, 1991

LENGTH OF VISIT: 3 days

DRAFT REPORT DUE: February 24, 1991

NCA STAFF: Dr. Charles Hall
(800) 621-7440
(312) 263-0456

FINAL REPORT DUE: March 17, 1991

COMMISSION ACTION: June 28, 1991

EVALUATION FEE: $5350.00

EVALUATION TEAM (Chair listed first):

Dr. Emma Willard
Dean, College of Education
Hutchins University
Aspen, CO 80303
(303) 499-7111
Higher Ed Administration/Teacher Education/Off-Campus Programs

Dr. Willard Gibbs
Professor of Physics
Oppenheimer University
Los Alamos, NM 87105
(505) 666-1212
Physics/Computer Science

Dr. Elizabeth Peabody
President
Curti College
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 521-6371
Administration/Finance/Planning

Dr. Charles S. Pierce
Chair, Humanities Division
Fitzgerald College
St. Paul, MN 55422
(612) 323-4141
Administration/English/Curriculum Development

APPENDIX E

A Planning Checklist for the Team Chairperson

Contact the executive officer to request that the institution

- ☐ make hotel reservations
- ☐ reserve a team meeting room at the hotel, if possible
- ☐ provide a meeting room for the team on campus
- ☐ set aside in the team's meeting room on campus the materials specified in Appendix C of this *Manual*
- ☐ provide secretarial assistance, if possible
- ☐ arrange for early meetings during the visit with
  - members of the governing board
  - representatives of the state coordinating board or other related agency
  - faculty representatives
  - student representatives
  - alumni and community leaders
- ☐ announce the visit and the availability of the team to confer with institutional personnel during "open time"
- ☐ make certain that all key personnel are available during the visit
- ☐ mail all institutional materials to the team one month before the visit

Contact team members to

- ☐ welcome any new C-Es and offer to provide additional assistance
- ☐ notify team members of hotel and other arrangements
- ☐ schedule the first team meeting
- ☐ share preliminary evaluation plan
- ☐ make tentative assignments of areas of special responsibility, including report writing
- ☐ request that they review the *Handbook of Accreditation, Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation*, and *Manual for the Evaluation Visit*, and that they bring these documents with them to the institution

The team chair should send copies of all correspondence to the Commission staff member working with the institution.

APPENDIX F

A Sample Title Page

REPORT OF A VISIT

TO

JOHN DEWEY COLLEGE

Chicago, Illinois

January 27-29, 1991

for the

Commission of Institutions of Higher Education

of the

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Willard Gibbs, Professor of Physics, Oppenheimer University, Los Alamos NM 87105

Elizabeth Peabody, President, Curti College, Madison WI 53703

Charles S. Pierce, Chairperson of the Humanities Division, Fitzgerald College, St. Paul MN 55422

Emma Willard, Dean of the College of Education, Hutchins University, Aspen CO 80303 (Chairperson)

APPENDIX G

A Sample SAS Worksheet

(For an institution **not** required to appear before a Review Committee)

WORKSHEET FOR STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION: JOHN DEWEY COLLEGE
1100 South State Street
Chicago, IL 60605

TYPE OF REVIEW: A comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the Master's (professional) degree-granting level.

DATE OF THIS REVIEW: January 27-29, 1991

DATE OF SAS: February 1, 1986

REFERRED BY:

COMMISSION ACTION:

CONTROL: John Dewey College is a private, not-for-profit institution.

Institution — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

Team — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

STATUS: John Dewey College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Accredited: 1952– .

Institution — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

Team — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS: The College offers programs leading to the Bachelor's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degrees and Master's (professional curricula) degrees. It also offers credit courses not part of these degree programs.

Institution — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

Team — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

LOCATIONS: The College offers courses and programs at its campus in Chicago, Illinois; some courses and some programs are also offered at Moline and Galena, Illinois. Some courses are offered at various locations within Illinois.

Institution — Recommended Wording: The College offers courses and programs at its campus in Chicago, Illinois; some courses and some programs are also offered at Moline, Galena, and Dixon, Illinois. Some courses are offered at various locations within Illinois.

Team — Recommended Wording: Same as institution's recommended wording.

STIPULATIONS: None.

Institution — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

Team — Recommended Wording: The College's programs at Moline, Galena, and Dixon are limited to the Master's in Business Administration degree.

REPORTS REQUIRED: None.

Team — Recommended Wording: NO CHANGE

FOCUSED EVALUATIONS: None.

Team — Recommended Wording: The College is scheduled for an evaluation in 1995-96 focused on the success of the College in improving its financial condition and its development at the graduate level.

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS: John Dewey College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1985-86. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1990-91.

Team — Recommended Wording: John Dewey College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1990-91. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 2000-2001.

Index of Commission Policies

The following is an index of Commission policies with references to where information related to each policy can be found in *A Handbook of Accreditation*, *A Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation*, and *A Manual for the Evaluation Visit*. The index appears in all three publications and is designed as a cross-reference. H/ identifies the *Handbook*, M/ the *Manual*, and G/ the *Guide* followed by the appropriate page number(s). The number ( ) following each policy identifies its internal policy number.

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Types of Affiliation (I.A.1) H/9

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- Accreditation (I.A.1b.) H/9-10, 15-18
- General Institutional Requirements (I.A.1c.) H/10-15

Withdrawal of Application for Accredited or Candidate Status (I.A.2.) H/30

Resignation from Affiliation with the Commission (I.A.3.) H/10

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Mechanics of the Process

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- Communication with Institution (I.B.1b.) H/13
- Exit Interview (I.B.1c.) H/28, M/22-23
- Distribution of the Team Report (I.B.1d.) M/36
- Public Disclosure of the Team Report (I.B.1e.) H/46
- Institutional Response to Team Report (I.B.1f.) H/28, M/37-38
- Review of Team Recommendation
  - — Readers' Panel (I.B.1g(1). H/28-29, M/38-39
  - — Review Committee (I.B.1g(2).) H/28-29, M/39-40
- Response to Review Committee Recommendation (I.B.1h.) H/29, M/39-40

- Other Recommendations to the Commission
  - — Evaluators' Panel (I.B.1i(1).) H/36-37
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Changes in an Institution's Operations or Students (I.C.2.) H/37

Changes Affecting the Statement of Affiliation Status (I.C.3.) ... H/33-34

- Commission Delegation of Authority (I.C.3a.) H/31-32, 36-39
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Transfer of Credit (I.C.5.) H/79

Separately Accreditable Institutions (I.C.6.) H/39

Transfer of Accreditation (I.C.7.) H/38

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Accreditation and Institutional Mergers (I.C.9.) H/38

Accreditation of Closing Institutions (I.C.10.) H/38

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Length of Appointment (II.A.2.) ..... OR*

Availability of Consultant-Evaluator's Professional Data Forms to Others (II.A.3.) ..... OR*

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Institution Review of Team (II.B.2.) H/27, M/8

Conflict of Interest (II.B.3.) M/4

Commissioners Participation on Teams (II.B.4.) ..... OR*

Observers on Teams (II.B.5.) M/8

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Recommendation of Consultants (II.C.1.) ..... OR*

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IV. THE COMMISSION AND THE PUBLIC

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OR* Indicates an internal policy not mentioned in the publications. The policy is available from the Commission office on request.

The Commission 1990

Chair: Sue Seibert Farnsworth, (Public Member) Attorney, WV

Vice-Chair: Roland Dille, President, Moorhead State University, MN

Margaret S. Anderson, Public Member, AZ

Otto F. Bauer, Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Nebraska at Omaha, NE

Jack L. Bottenfield, President, Iowa Central Community College, IA

Mary Ann Carroll, Dean, School of Graduate Studies, and Director of Research, Indiana State University, IN

Sr. Austin Doherty, Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Alverno College, WI

Zelema Harris, President, Penn Valley Community College, MO

Bradley D. Jesson, (Public Member), Attorney, AR

Harold Kolenbrander, President, Mount Union College, OH

Rita S. Meyer, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Minnesota-Crookston, MN

Glenn A. Niemeyer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Grand Valley State University, MI

Patsy Sampson, President, Stephens College, MO

Joan Wadlow, Provost, University of Oklahoma-Norman, OK

Morton W. Weir, Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL

Ex-Officio: Ronald W. Roskens, President Emeritus and Professor, University of Nebraska, NE (as NCA President)

The Commission Staff

Executive Director ..... Dr. Patricia A. Thrash

Deputy Director ..... Dr. Steven D. Crow

Associate Director (on leave 1989-90) ..... Dr. Joseph J. Semrow

Associate Director/Operations ..... Ms. Susan E. Van Kollenburg

Assistant Director ..... Dr. Jean Mather

Assistant Director ..... Dr. Gerald W. Patton

Visiting Staff Associate (1989-90) ..... Dr. Katherine C. Delaney

Commission Calendar

1990

January 15, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	Review Committee Meeting
February 22-23, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	Commissioners' Meeting
March 17, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	Board of Directors' Meeting
March 18-20, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	NCA Annual Meeting
March 19, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	Commissioners' Meeting
May 11, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	Review Committee Meeting
June 21-22, 1990 (Jackson, WY)	Commissioners' Meeting
July 19-20, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	Review Committee Meeting
August 23-24, 1990 (Chicago, IL)	Commissioners' Meeting
October 18-20, 1990 (Fargo, ND)	Commissioners' Meeting

1991

January 18, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	Review Committee Meeting
February 14-15, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	Commissioners' Meeting
March 16, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	Board of Directors' Meeting
March 17-19, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	NCA Annual Meeting
March 18, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	Commissioners' Meeting
May 20, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	Review Committee Meeting
June 27-28, 1991 (Milwaukee, WI)	Commissioners' Meeting
July 22, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	Review Committee Meeting
August 22-23, 1991 (Chicago, IL)	Commissioners' Meeting
October 17-19, 1991 (Little Rock, AR)	Commissioners' Meeting

Publications Available from the Commission

The following publications can be ordered from the Commission's Chicago office:

A Handbook of Accreditation. This document provides an overview of the Commission's accreditation process and a brief history of how that process has evolved. $4.00.

A Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation. This document provides assistance to institutions preparing for Commission evaluation as they organize and conduct their self-study processes and report the results. $4.00.

A Manual for the Evaluation Visit. This document provides general information about the evaluation visit. $4.00.

NCA Quarterly. The Spring issue of this publication provides the directory of affiliated postsecondary institutions; the Summer issue provides the list of affiliated elementary and secondary schools; the Fall issue features articles of particular interest to persons in higher education; the Winter issue includes articles of particular interest to persons in elementary and secondary schools. Themes of recent Fall issues are: Fall 1987, "Rethinking Accreditation"; Fall 1988, "Issues in International Education"; Fall 1989, "The Role of Institutional Accreditation in Enhancing Quality." Spring issue: $4.00. Summer issue: $5.00. Fall issue: $3.00. Winter issue: $3.00.

A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement. This publication includes papers from CIHE Annual Meeting programs that provide advice and suggestions on self-study and address a wide variety of topics related to accreditation and institutional improvement. $10.00.

Briefing. This Commission newsletter is published three times each year. The November issue includes a special insert on the upcoming Annual Meeting. *Briefing* is an invaluable resources for institutions and evaluators who need to be informed of Commission activities. Subscription: $10.00/year.

Accreditation of Postsecondary Institutions: An Overview. This pamphlet provides general information about the accreditation of postsecondary institutions by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. $1.00.

Guidelines on International Education Programs. The following working documents have been developed by Commission staff to assist institutions and teams in planning and evaluating new international education ventures: "Guidelines for Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals" and "A Practical Guide for Organizing and Conducting International Evaluation Visits." No charge. Limit: one set.

Prices subject to change.

A Manual for the Evaluation Visit

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
159 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

1990-92